

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A container equipped with a closure device that permits a user to manipulate or withdraw an object placed within said container, wherein said closure device has a plane and is comprised of a closure mechanism that can deform elastically essentially in the plane of the closure device to change from a closed state of rest under no external stress to an open active state under an external stress, wherein the closure device comprises at least one rigid peripheral support structure attached to which is the closure mechanism that is comprised of elastically deformable elastic bands which intersect each other at a center of intersection and cooperate with each other to define an opening through which a sleeve having a diameter and forming a closure member extends, and which elastic bands surround the sleeve of the closure member at said center of intersection such that, when the elastically deformable elastic bands are in a state of rest under no external stress, the diameter of the sleeve is restricted by the elastic bands so that the closure member is closed.

2. (canceled)

~~2~~ 3. (previously presented) The container as claimed in claim 1, wherein the rigid peripheral support structure is a rigid frame on which the elastically deformable elastic bands are stretched between two roughly opposite points.

6 ~~4~~. (currently amended) A container equipped with a closure device that permits a user to manipulate or withdraw an object placed within said container, wherein said closure device has a plane and is comprised of a closure mechanism that can deform elastically essentially in the plane of the closure device to change from a closed state of rest under no external stress to an open active state under an external stress, wherein the closure device comprises at least one rigid peripheral support structure attached to which is the closure mechanism that is comprised of elastically deformable elastic bands which intersect each other and surround a sleeve having a diameter and forming a closure member such that, when the elastically deformable elastic bands are in a state of rest under no external stress, the diameter of the sleeve is restricted by the elastic bands so that the closure member is closed, the at least one rigid peripheral support structure is a rigid frame on which the elastically deformable elastic bands are stretched between two roughly

opposite points, and the rigid peripheral support structure comprises at least one ring having an inside diameter and a center, and the elastically deformable elastic bands are attached in groups of two juxtaposed elastic bands defining a pair of elastic bands and fixed to the ring at their diametrically opposed ends.

7 ⁶/₅. (previously presented) The container as claimed in claim ⁶/₄, wherein the sleeve of the closure member is made of flexible material having a length of at least twice the diameter, each end of the sleeve passes through each pair of elastic bands in the center of the ring, where the sleeve is contracted radially in the closed rest state of the device, or defines a single through opening for the object in the open state of the device, in which state the elastic bands are deformed radially.

8 ⁷/₆. (previously presented) The container as claimed in claim ⁷/₅, wherein one end of the sleeve is fixed peripherally to an outer face of a first ring and the other end of said sleeve is fixed peripherally to an opposite outer face of a second ring identical to the first ring, the sleeve being contracted radially in a middle zone between each pair of elastic bands, the elastic bands being attached to the first or second rings which are themselves fixed to each other via their inner faces.

9 ⁸/₇. (currently amended) The container as claimed in claim ⁸/₆, wherein the first and second rings are ~~offset angularly~~ offset at 90° with respect to each other ~~while twisting the sleeve axially, this angular offset being preferably approximately 90°.~~

10 ⁸/₈. (previously presented) The container as claimed in claim ⁸/₆, wherein the first and second rings are held together by adhesive bonding or by stitching.

11 ⁷/₉. (previously presented) The container as claimed in claim ⁷/₅, wherein the sleeve is made of fabric.

12 ⁷/₁₀. (currently amended) The container as claimed in claim ⁷/₅, wherein the elastic bands are eight in number and the pairs of juxtaposed bands are ~~and attached in pairs~~ distributed in such a way as to pass through the center of their corresponding supporting ring so as to form in the respective supporting ring eight essentially identical sectors.

13 ~~11.~~ (previously presented) The container as claimed in claim ~~5~~⁷, wherein the elastic bands are under tension on their corresponding supporting ring in the closed state of the device.

3 ~~12.~~ (previously presented) The container as claimed in claim 1, wherein said container is a straight or curved cylinder provided with a closure device at each end.

4 ~~13.~~ (previously presented) The container as claimed in claim 1, further including at least a part made of a transparent material.

5 ~~14.~~ (previously presented) The container as claimed in claim 1, wherein the container is made of materials adapted for being used under weightless conditions.

14 ~~15.~~ (currently amended) The container as claimed in claim ~~4~~⁶, wherein the elastically deformable elastic bands of said closure mechanism keep the sleeve closely around an object while placed within the container.